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Letter dated 23 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the position expressed by my Government at the end of the work in Addis Ababa on the national dialogue (see annex).

My Government would be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ileka **Atoki**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Position of the Congolese Government at the end of the work in Addis Ababa on the national dialogue

Kinshasa, Saturday, 20 October 2001

1. You will recall that, within the framework of the national dialogue process, the facilitator organized in Gaborone (Botswana) a preparatory committee, which consisted of 70 delegates from the five component groups provided for under the Lusaka Accord.

2. Those meetings, the success of which was recognized by the entire world, adopted the following resolutions:

- The national dialogue was to be held in Addis Ababa beginning on 15 October 2001.
- The national dialogue was to be **inclusive in nature**. To this end, it was to be composed of **320 participants** and was to be opened to certain major social and political groups, whose specific representation was to be organized by the facilitator. This relates to the RCD/ML, the Mai-Mai and the religious denominations.
- A recommendation was made that the political opposition component should better balance its representation and that all component groups should take account of their representation of women.
- The draft agenda and the draft rules of procedure drawn up at the Gaborone meetings were to be submitted to the plenary meeting of the national dialogue for adoption.

3. On 15 October in Addis Ababa, it was noted that the facilitator had not been able to bring together either the 320 delegates expected or the representatives of the groups referred to. Their participation, however, was needed to guarantee the inclusive nature of the national dialogue.

4. In his opening statement, the facilitator suggested that the lack of financial means at his disposal was the reason for this situation.

5. The facilitator then proposed that the work of the national dialogue should begin with the 70 persons present in Addis Ababa, whereas the other participants would join the dialogue as donors provided funds for the facilitation work.

6. The Government pointed out that such a step was irrational and unusual for meetings of that type since the agenda items adopted by the initial nucleus could be brought into question each time a group would come to join the initial group.

There was thus a risk of beginning work again each time new groups of delegates came to Addis Ababa as a result of an increase in the financial means at the disposal of the facilitator.

7. Certain component groups, particularly the RCD, the MLC and a part of the political opposition, having acknowledged the correctness of the Government's position, then proposed that the 70 delegates who were present in Addis Ababa and who had participated in the work of the preparatory committee in Gaborone, should replace the plenary group for the national dialogue and begin work immediately.

8. The Government pointed out that that proposal violated the spirit and letter of the Lusaka Accord and the resolutions adopted at the meetings in Gaborone, which stipulated that *the dialogue must be inclusive* and therefore should include the representatives of all the social and political *forces vives* in order to prevent those resolutions from being called into question subsequently. The Government also asked how a preparatory committee could be transformed into a plenary assembly.

The Government lastly underscored that the political crisis that had been affecting our country for several years was due to the fact that it was difficult for Congolese politicians to agree on the rules to be followed and when they did agree they were unable to respect them.

How could one agree that the resolutions adopted by consensus in Gaborone two months earlier should be reconsidered by the very same persons who had drawn them up? Did that not portend a danger which could only serve to threaten the agreed implementation of the resolutions and other decisions which should result from the national dialogue?

For the Government, therefore, it was out of the question to hold a dialogue that was of little worth or was conducted under any possible conditions.

It was time for the Congolese politicians to begin to respect their commitments by respecting themselves and the Congolese people.

The dialogue, therefore, was to take place under the conditions defined in Gaborone, that is, with the 320 delegates as well as the representatives of the groups identified by consensus in Gaborone.

9. The facilitator then announced that the objective and important problem raised by the Government could be solved within the framework of the proposal of South Africa, which was prepared to host the national dialogue within one month by assuming the major share of the expenses involved.

10. *The Government and all the other component groups responded positively to this proposal.* It made it possible to put an end to a sterile debate and to respond to the expectations of the population and all the component groups by bringing together the 320 delegates provided for in Gabarone as well as the RCD/ML representatives, the Maï-Maï and the religious denominations.

11. The RCD, the MLC and a part of the political opposition then proposed making use of the presence of the 70 delegates from Gabarone in Addis Ababa in order to begin consideration of the agenda items and the rules of procedure for the dialogue. The facilitator supported that point of view, arguing that it might be difficult for him to explain to the international community that he had made some 100 persons travel to Addis Ababa for one week for nothing.

12. The Government, for its part, recalled that, in Gabarone, the 70 delegates present in Addis Ababa had already had the opportunity to draw up the draft agenda as well as the draft rules of procedure which the plenary meeting of the dialogue

was to consider for definitive adoption after making adjustments. There was no valid reason, therefore, for the same 70 delegates to resume work, in Addis Ababa, that they had already completed in Gabarone, particularly in view of the fact that the 320 delegates to the inclusive dialogue in South Africa would in any event again take up the draft agenda and the draft rules of procedure.

13. The Government, therefore, recommended that the facilitator should save resources by suspending the first phase of the dialogue, which had taken place in Addis Ababa, and make use of the period of time between the meetings in Addis Ababa and South Africa in order to solve the outstanding problems concerning the representation of the Maï-Maï, the religious denominations and the RCD dissident factions. He should also bring about a solution to the problems relating to the representation of the internal and external political opposition, many of whom feel excluded from the next national dialogue.

As the guarantor of peace and national unity, which distinguishes it from the other component groups in the dialogue, *the Government must ensure the involvement of all social and political sectors in the national dialogue* in order to prevent that forum, from the outset, from sowing the seeds of disputes contesting its resolutions because of the exclusion or marginalization of certain social and political forces.

14. The Government also wished to console the facilitator by showing him that the meetings in Addis Ababa would not be pointless since they would make it possible to:

- Bring together the representatives of all the component groups provided for in the national dialogue;
- Begin the work of the dialogue on the date scheduled;
- Reaffirm the will of the Congolese to conduct a dialogue for peace and national unity;
- Provide a new framework for the dialogue in order to ensure a successful outcome.

15. For these reasons, the Government decided to participate in the meeting convened on Friday, 19 October 2001, during which it had the opportunity to explain its position to the facilitator and the other component groups before withdrawing in order to devote itself to the preparation of the second phase of the national dialogue, which will take place in South Africa in the next few days.

16. Notwithstanding the stand taken by the Government, the suspension of the work of the meetings in Addis Ababa was inevitable in view of the precarious financial situation affecting the facilitation work, as demonstrated by the formal notice given by the facilitator to all the delegates, terminating their financial support on 20 October 2001.

17. In light of what occurred in Addis Ababa, it is clearly apparent that the Government remained respectful of the commitments undertaken in Gabarone and intends to continue the process of the national dialogue that began in Addis Ababa on 15 October 2001.